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## Technology for social cause



**VISIONARY:** Nobel laureate Muhammed Yunus inaugurating an international conference on Technology Enhanced Education organised by Amrita University at Amritapuri, near Kollam, on Tuesday. — PHOTO: C. SURESH KUMAR (REPORT ON BACK PAGE)

## Use technology to solve socio-economic problems, says Muhammed Yunus

Staff Reporter

**KOLLAM:** Noted Bangladeshi economist, founder of the Grameen Bank programme and Nobel Laureate Muhammed Yunus has said that technology should be used for solving socio-economic problems rather than for commercial exploitation.

He was inaugurating a three-day International Conference on Technology Enhanced Education organised by Amrita University at Amritapuri near here on Tuesday.

Prof. Yunus said it was time to discard the economic theory that business was all about profit making. "Business is to solve problems and not to make money" and this is the success behind the Grameen Bank programme, he said.

The theme of the conference is 'Educational technology for social benefit.'

Calling on scientists and technologists to develop more "digital geniuses" like the mobile phones to improve the lives of the poor and needy, Prof. Yunus said countries like India and Bangladesh which were facing a slew of crises should look for open technology to solve problems.

Talking on his experience in developing the Grameen Bank programme to help poor women in rural areas of his country, Prof. Yunus said that as of

now more than 8.3 million borrowers, of which 97 per cent were women, benefitted from the programme. "The programme succeeded in weaning people away from begging by making them salespersons." He said that as a result of the programme, today 22,000 people had stopped begging and become door-to-door salesmen in his country.

Explaining how he used technology to solve energy problem in Bangladesh, he said that 70 per cent of the people of his country had no access to electricity. The situation changed dramatically with the introduction of the "solar home system" which his organisation promoted.

In the beginning (1994) only ten systems could be sold each month and presently 750,000 systems were operating in the country which could go up to one million by June this year, he said.

Prof. Yunus said that he had initiated micro finance to get over poverty without any intention of making money out of the poor people. But today that idea was being abused by people to make money by lending money to the poor. "This is a complete abuse of the very purpose for which micro finance was created." In order to control this, there should be proper legislation to create a banking system for the poor.